



Request for Applications

2018 NAEP Cooperative Agreements

Research and Development for the National Assessment of Educational Progress

Title: NAEP Cooperative Agreements, Research and Development

Date Issued: October 1, 2018

Application Due Date: October 30, 2018 by 11:59 PM EST

Applications submitted online: <http://naep-research.airprojects.org/Agreements/Index>

Submit questions to: NAEP_RD@air.org

This document includes information on the purpose, process, and application for research and development cooperative agreements to support research and development for the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

AIR, on behalf of NCES, is soliciting applications for work to be conducted collaboratively with NCES NAEP staff or their contractors. For selected applications, the work will be conducted under a consultant or subcontract agreement with American Institutes for Research (AIR) under contract ED-IES-12-D-0002/0004 with the Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics.

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NAEP Cooperative Agreements

Research and Development for the National Assessment of Educational Progress

Section 1. Introduction and Strategic Plan for NAEP

The mission of the [National Assessment of Educational Progress](#) (NAEP) is to provide, in a timely manner, a fair and accurate measurement of educational achievement in reading, mathematics, and other content areas, including writing, science, history, geography, civics, economics, foreign languages, and the arts. NAEP assessments track educational achievement in grades 4, 8, and 12 at the national and regional levels and, in some subjects and grades, in states as well as in the large urban school districts that participate in the Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA). NAEP also reports on national long-term trend assessments in reading and mathematics for students at ages 9, 13, and 17. NAEP is administered by the Assessment Division (AD) within the [National Center for Education Statistics](#) (NCES).

NAEP is the largest continuing and nationally representative assessment of what our nation's students know and can do in core subjects. NAEP is congressionally mandated and was first administered in 1969 to measure student achievement nationally. NAEP reports results for different demographic groups (such as gender, socioeconomic status, and race/ethnicity) in mathematics and reading on a frequent and regular basis and in other subjects periodically. Each NAEP assessment is developed using assessment and content specialists; education experts; technology, program, and IT experts; and teachers from around the United States. Teachers, principals, parents, policymakers, and researchers all use NAEP results to assess progress and develop ways to improve education in the United States.

“NAEP is to provide, in a timely manner, a fair and accurate measurement of student academic achievement and reporting of trends in such achievement in reading, mathematics, and other subject matter as specified.”

*Education Sciences Reform Act
(P.L. 107-279)
20 USC 9622*

The Education Sciences Reform Act (P.L. 107-279) is the governing statute of NAEP. This law stipulates that NCES must develop and administer NAEP and report NAEP results. Under this law, the National Assessment Governing Board is given responsibility for setting the assessment schedule, developing the frameworks that provide the blueprint for the content and design of the assessment, and setting achievement levels.

Strategic Plan for NAEP

To fulfill the responsibility of its mandate, the NCES NAEP program has set forth a strategic plan for NAEP to maintain its position as (1) the most authoritative source of information concerning patterns and trends in the academic achievement of American youth; and (2) a model of excellence and innovation in large-scale assessment. To that end, the NCES strategic plan for NAEP includes five major goals, shown in table 1.

Table 1. National Assessment of Educational Progress Strategic Goals and Subgoals

| Goals | | Subgoals |
|------------|--|--|
| Utility | Strengthen the utility of NAEP data | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide broader context for NAEP data through linkages, alignments, and additional reporting variables |
| Content | Adopt new approaches toward assessment content | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that NAEP assessment content is responsive to changes in the educational environment, assessment procedures, and academic achievement requirements |
| Innovation | Lead in assessment innovation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep NAEP at the forefront of educational assessments through research and innovation • Take advantage of advances in technology in the development and delivery of assessments |
| Usability | Enhance communication | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the usability of NAEP data through enhanced reporting • Serve as a resource for best practices and lessons learned |
| Efficiency | Improve operational processes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase operational efficiency, likely through the utilization of technology • Increase the effectiveness of NAEP’s design and processes • Integrate the components or processes of NAEP with those of other NCES-supported assessments |

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress Strategic Plan, 2018.

The NAEP program has a long history of bringing innovation to large-scale testing. For example, from its earliest days, NAEP adopted matrix sampling—in which different samples of students were given different samples of assessment items—so that a large number of items could be administered to the student sample without overburdening individual students. Over time, NAEP has innovated on matrix sampling to improve measurement and efficiency through test booklet design. Early NAEP innovations, such as Balanced Incomplete Block (BIB) spiraling, were adopted across the large-scale assessment field. In addition, NAEP fostered innovations in estimation, such as the use of [plausible values](#) to estimate group performance. Software such as AM[®], DESI[®], and [EdSurvey](#) has also been developed to meet the demand for secondary analysis of NAEP data. Recently, NAEP has moved from paper-and-pencil assessments to a digitally based assessment platform. This advancement, which has allowed for innovation in item types and the collection of process data from the student’s interaction with the test (e.g., timing data and what the student “clicks” or types), reflects the growing use of technology in education.

For more information on the history and background of NAEP, see the following resources:

- [National Assessment of Educational Progress home page](#)
- [The Nation’s Report Card](#)
- [A Technical History of NAEP](#), drawn from chapter 2.1 of [The NAEP Primer](#) (NCES 2011-463). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC.
- [NAEP Research e-Center](#)
- [National Assessment Governing Board](#)

This cooperative agreement opportunity is one avenue in which NAEP continues its pursuit of keeping an accurate measure of student progress and advancing the field of large-scale assessment. The following sections describe the goals and funding priorities of the NAEP Cooperative Agreements, eligibility requirements, and application process.

Section 2. Cooperative Agreement Goals & Funding Priorities

Project Goals

The goal of the NAEP Cooperative Agreements is to lend support to the vision for NAEP—to be the most authoritative source of information concerning patterns and trends in the academic achievement of American youth and a model of excellence and innovation in large-scale assessment—by providing opportunities to the assessment and research community to address known challenges and bring new ideas and innovations to NAEP.

AIR, on behalf of NCES, is soliciting applications for work to be conducted collaboratively with NCES NAEP staff or their contractors. Funds will be used to support development, research, and analysis to advance NAEP’s test development and administrations; scoring; psychometric analysis and reporting; secondary data analysis; and product development.

The priority areas defined by NCES for the cooperative agreements are described below.

Funding Priorities

Applicants are invited to submit ideas for innovation in one or more of the following priority areas:

1. Operations: Test Development and Administration

The development and administration of NAEP assessments are complex and ever changing. For example, decisions must be made on how NAEP should change to keep pace with technological advancements and the growing usage of technology in classrooms. NAEP has recently transitioned from a paper- and pencil-based assessment to a digitally based assessment. This has led NCES to be interested in ideas and innovations regarding technology-enhanced items; developing a better understanding of the measurement of cognitive and non-cognitive skills; enhancements and improvements to test administration processes; computer adaptive testing, and accessibility features.

2. Operations: Scoring, Psychometric Analysis, and Reporting

The scoring, psychometric analysis, and reporting of data is a large endeavor for the NAEP assessment program and must be considered when making changes and advancements in item types, the use of technology, and other operational changes. NCES is interested in new methods for automating scoring and research into, and the implications of using, such methods. In addition, research on the analysis and communication of data collected throughout the NAEP cycle—for example, how process data (also called log files or event data) can be used for research and reporting—is a priority of NCES. Lastly, NCES is interested in new methods for reporting and data visualization for the NAEP program.

3. Secondary Analysis, Reporting NAEP Trends Over 50 Years: 1969 to 2019

Results for the 2019 NAEP Reading and Mathematics assessments are available for grades 4 and 8. With the release of these data, there comes an opportunity to look at NAEP results for the past 50 years, from 1969 to 2019. NCES is interested in research topics for secondary data analysis that propose to use innovative methods of data analysis across this time period using the NAEP data.

4. Product Development

NCES is also interested in products that would enhance and improve its digitally based assessments. Product development is meant to be a broad category and could include applications for enhancing the assessment platform, such as improvement to the equation editor application; data visualization tools to display NAEP data; and automated item generation or test assembly software.

Section 3. Eligibility Information

Eligible applicants include any individual or team that does not hold a prime contract under the Education Statistics Services Institutes Network (ESSIN) or NAEP Alliance contracts. Applicants can include non-profit and for-profit organizations and public and private agencies and institutions, such as colleges and universities. Letters of support from partners must be submitted with the application.

Section 4. Terms and Conditions

If your application is selected, the work will be conducted under a consultant or subcontract agreement with American Institutes for Research (AIR) under contract ED-IES-12-D-0002/0004 with the Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics. All subcontract agreements will adhere to flow-down clauses within the prime contract. Specific terms and conditions will be negotiated between AIR and selected individual applicant(s) and team(s). If you have questions, please contact us at NAEP_RD@air.org.

In addition, each submission must contain a signed conflict-of-interest certification. The conflict-of-interest form can be found in appendix B.

Section 5. Application and Submission Information

Application Deadlines

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>Webinar (Optional) NCES will host an optional webinar to describe and answer questions about the purpose and application process of the NAEP Cooperative Agreements program. If you would like to join, please register below:</p> <p>https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/3686201086621060865</p> | <p>October 2, 2018 at 1:00–2:00 p.m. EST</p> |
| <p>Applications Due Application requirements can be found within this document and at the NAEP Cooperative Agreements website (link below).</p> <p>All applications should be submitted through the NAEP Cooperative Agreements website:</p> <p>http://naep-research.airprojects.org/Agreements/Index</p> | <p>October 30, 2018 by 11:59 p.m. EST</p> |
| <p>Notification of Awards All applicants will be notified no later than the date provided.</p> | <p>November 30, 2018</p> |

For questions or assistance, please e-mail NAEP_RD@air.org.

Awards

The NAEP Cooperative Agreement term will be up to 12 months from the time of award. The number of awards made will be based on the availability of funding and the receipt of applications aligned with NCES priorities. Award amounts will range from a minimum of \$25,000 to a maximum of \$200,000.

Application Requirements

Applications must include the following:

1. **Application Cover.** The application cover must include the name of the lead individual or company for the project and the corresponding contact information (including address, telephone number, and e-mail address).

2. **Project Abstract** (500-word limit). Short description of the proposed work.
3. **Project Description** (10-page maximum). Include the priority area and details about how this work will solve a current challenge or move the NAEP program forward. Include the goals for the project and describe activities, procedures, and methods to achieve those goals. Describe any products that will be developed.
4. **Project Needs** (2-page maximum). Describe what the project team will need from NCES to be able to complete the work (e.g., access to data, the eNAEP system, assessment items).
5. **Collaboration** (1-page maximum). As this is a cooperative agreement, NCES expects to be involved in the work conducted and provide advice and consultation during the life cycle of the project. Describe when and how the team envisions the collaboration between the project team and NCES.
6. **Capabilities and Staff Experience** (2-page maximum, not including resumes of key staff or letters of support). Identify the staff and organizations responsible for carrying out project activities. Describe capabilities and experience relevant to this project. Please include whether staff have experience with NAEP, large-scale assessment data, or assessment operations. Also include resumes of key personnel. Resumes and letters of support from partner organizations (if applicable) may be included in an appendix.
7. **Timeline and Major Milestone Deliveries.** Include a timeline and table with deliverables, as applicable.
8. **Budget.** Include a budget that shows price per task or deliverable, breakdown of non-labor costs, and level of effort in hours. Prices need to be justified to determine reasonableness of cost. For convenience, a budget template in Excel is provided at <http://naep-research.airprojects.org/Agreements/Index> (see document NAEPCooperativeAgreement.xlsx).
9. **Conflict of Interest Certification.** See appendix B for form to include.

Other Requirements:

- Technical applications should be single-spaced, using a standard 12-point font with 1-inch margins and submitted in PDF or MS Word format.
- Budgets should be submitted in PDF or MS Excel format.
- Technical and budget submissions should not exceed 5MB each.

Section 6. Application Review Information

Selection Criteria

All submitted applications will be reviewed by an expert panel, which may include staff from NCES, current NAEP contractor staff, and members of the Research Program Advisory Panel.

Applications receiving the highest scores will be considered for Cooperative Agreement awards. Scores will be determined by how effectively the Application Requirements are addressed with the scoring rubric presented in appendix A, which expands upon the following scoring guide:

- Project Description: 45 points
- Collaboration: 15 points
- Capabilities and Staff Experience: 10 points
- Budget: 10 points

Appendix A: Scoring Rubric

The following rubric will be used to evaluate the submitted applications.

| Project Description | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|--|
| | 15 | 10 | 5 | 0 |
| Project Goals | Project goals are clear and the proposed work is well aligned with NAEP priority needs | Project goals are stated and there is some evidence that the work is aligned with NAEP priority needs | Project goals are stated and there is weak evidence that the work is aligned with NAEP priority needs | Project goals are unclear and outside the NAEP priority areas |
| Description of Activities, Procedures, and Methods | Activities, procedures, and methods described are detailed, clear, and appropriate for the project goals | Activities, procedures, and methods described are somewhat less detailed and appropriate for the project goals | Activities, procedures, and methods are weakly described, and unclear if appropriate for the project goals | Activities, procedures, and methods are missing or not appropriate for the project goals |
| Project Needs | The application demonstrates a clear understanding of what is needed to conduct the work | The application demonstrates some understanding of what is needed to conduct the work | The application demonstrates a weak understanding of what is needed to conduct the work | The application does not indicate an understanding of what is needed (or what is needed is not available). |
| Collaboration | | | | |
| | 15 | 10 | 5 | 0 |
| Collaboration | Application includes a well-defined plan identifying when and how the project team will collaborate with NCES | Application shows some indication of when and how the project team will collaborate with NCES | Application shows little indication of when and how the project team will collaborate with NCES | Description of collaboration with NCES is missing |
| Capabilities and Staff Experience | | | | |
| | | 10 | 5 | 0 |
| Capabilities and Staff Experience | | Application demonstrates strong capabilities and experience aligned with project | Application demonstrates good capabilities and experience aligned with project | Application demonstrates weak capabilities and experience aligned with project |

| Budget | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|---|
| | | 10 | 5 | 0 |
| | | Budget items appear reasonable for the work described | Some budget items are not reasonable (too high/too low) for the work described | Budget overall is unreasonable for the work described |
| Questions for the applicant | | | | |
| <p><i>Clarifying questions may be asked of the applicant. Scores may be adjusted based on answers.</i></p> | | | | |
| Total Score (<i>max = 80</i>) | | | | |

Appendix B: Conflict of Interest

Each submission should include a completed conflict-of-interest certification.

Conflict of Interest Certification

The offeror, _____, hereby certifies that, to the best of its knowledge and belief, there are no present or currently planned interests (financial, contractual, organizational, or otherwise) relating to the work to be performed under contract/task order ED-IES-12-D-0002/0004 that would create any actual, potential, or apparent conflict of interest (including one for an immediate family member: spouse, parent, or child) that would impinge on its ability to render impartial, technically sound, and objective assistance or advice or result in the offeror being given an unfair competitive advantage. In this clause, the term "potential" conflict refers to one that is reasonably foreseeable. The offeror further certifies that it has and will continue to exercise due diligence in identifying and removing or mitigating, to the Government's satisfaction, such actual, potential, or apparent conflicts of interest.

Offeror's Name _____

Contract No. ED-IES-12-D-0002/0004

Signature _____

Title _____

Date _____